

Modern sociology is virtually an attempt to take up the larger program of social analysis and interpretation which was implicit in Adam Smith's moral philosophy, but which was suppressed for a century by prevailing interest in the technique of the production of wealth.

-- Albion W. Small (1854-1926)

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2009 John F. Schnabel Distinguished Contribution to Teaching Award



This 2009 recipient of the North Central Sociological Association's John F. Schnabel Distinguished Contributions to Teaching Award

is **Melinda Messineo**, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, Ball State University, Muncie, IN

Melinda's commitment to teaching is seamlessly integrated into her role as a researcher. In addition to the many teaching-related presentations she has given, she has a strong record of publishing in the *Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL)*.

Melinda is an active participant at the NCSA. Melinda also spearheaded an effort at BSU to start bringing students to the NCSA meetings. In 2003 she wrote a Lilly Foundation grant asking for funds to help give students intensive research experiences, including the opportunity to attend and/or present at sociology conferences.

2009

NCSA ANNUAL MEETING IN DEARBORN

This year's annual NCSA meeting in Dearborn, Michigan, was held on April 16-19, 2009. Over 80 research and teaching sessions were held. And special tours of nearby Detroit sites of importance to sociologists were available for conference participants.

Many individuals contributed to this successful meeting, but a special thanks goes to the Program Chair Lissa Yogan and Vice President Elect Lynn Richey for all their hard work putting together such a complex program with such a diversity of sessions.

The theme of the 2009 meeting was

"The Sociological Way of Looking at the World: Research, Teaching, and Application"

2009 Aida Tomah Distinguished Service Award

This year the NCSA is pleased to present the Aida Tomah Distinguished Service Award to **Bruce Keith**, Professor of Sociology and Associate Dean of Academic Affairs at United States Military Academy at West Point.



Bruce has been an active member of NCSA since 1992 serving on a number of NCSA committees: Finance Committee, Student Paper Awards Committee, Council Representative, Committee on the Assessment of Organizational Goals, and the Membership Committee. He was elected Vice President and President. Since then, he has continued to serve, on the Nominations Committee, and again on the Membership Committee (as Co-Chair).

This award recognizes an NCSA member who has accomplished the following: Service to the NCSA in many capacities and over a long period.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

By
Dr. Irving Zeitlin



On Friday, April 17th, Irving Zeitlin, Faculty Associate in the Centre for Ethics and Professor of Sociology at the University of

Toronto, gave the keynote talk titled "Education for Democracy in Pierce, James, Dewey, and Mead."

Zeitlin began by noting that American philosopher, Charles Sanders Peirce, first defined the term "pragmatism" in the article "How to Make Our Ideas Clear" (1877). Zeitlin said, "So our primary aim this afternoon is to explore the means by which we can achieve clarity in our ideas and educate ourselves and our students toward the ideal of critical and self-critical thinking."

Zeitlin noted that long before the term pragmatism had been defined, the pragmatic approach was evident in classical traditions of social thought. For example, Aristotle argued that people become just by performing just acts; in other words, virtues are learned through the performance of virtuous acts and they are repeated until established as a "habit conduct"

Zeitlin then considered how "ideological indoctrination" may inhibit people's ability to think critically. "Certain ideas-- as dogmas or articles of faith -- are inculcated, which the child is taught never to question, even though such ideas are contrary to the child's best interests and contrary to the interests of the group to which the child belongs."

Zeitlin argued that "immunizing ourselves against ideological indoctrination requires *objectivity* in the sense that both Max Weber and the pragmatists demanded it from teachers and scholars." For Zeitlin this means teachers and scholars must rid themselves of fallacious beliefs in order to pursue truth and knowledge. He calls for a "pragmatic moralism" in which we "consciously and

deliberately adapt an objective attitude and make it a morally dutiful habit."

Zeitlin then drew upon the works of Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, John Dewey, and George Herbert Mead to explain pragmatic moralism.

For William James, a habit is a "learned, non-instinctual, pattern formed so we can contend with reality." By contrast, Zeitlin views a non-habitual action as requiring "consciousness, perception, and will." But consciousness is like Heraditus' river, one can never step into the same spot twice. Zeitlin asked then, how do we acquire a self-consciousness if consciousness is always moving? Zeitlin believes that the self can only be acquired through Mead's notion of "internalizing the attitudes of the other." Furthermore, "the self is the active, creating organizer of all consciousness."

Along a similar line of reasoning, Zeitlin noted that for Dewey "virtually everything is learned." Dewey, reacting against the theory of instinctualism, believed animals have a "natural potential" for activities like hunting, but still animals have to learn these behaviors. Similarly, people learn behaviors and, may choose to act or not act in a given situation.

Finally, Zeitlin stated that Mead adds several new insights to his pragmatic predecessors. Mead's concept of the "conversation of gestures" illustrates the reflexive thought in any symbolic exchange. Zeitlin argues that through significant gestures, or symbols, thinking takes place. "What is thinking if not an internal conversation like the conversations we carry on externally with others?"

Language then is acquired by learning the meanings of symbols. A human, or animal, is never strictly determined by her past for she must use interpretation of the symbols and the ever-changing conditions to problem solve.

Zeitlin concluded, "the pragmatists have provided us with a fruitful method by which to gain valuable insights into the human condition."

The full text of Irving Zeitlin's address will be available in an upcoming issue of *Sociological Focus*

Recipient of the 2009
J. Milton Yinger Distinguished
Lifetime Career Award



Kent Schwirian

The J. Milton Yinger Lifetime Distinguished Career Award in Sociology was named for Professor Yinger, the only president of NCSA to also be president of ASA. His career exemplified the three factors that are considered in selecting winners of the award: teaching, research and public sociology. This year's winner, Kent Schwirian, has demonstrated a commitment to these dimensions of our discipline.

Schwirian received his Ph.D. from the University of Iowa in August of 1962 and a month later started teaching at Ohio State University; he is still at Ohio State. Even after his retirement a few years ago, the Sociology Department kept calling him back to teach those huge intro classes, which says a lot about his commitment to teaching. So does the fact that his intro text, *Sociology for the 21st Century* is now in its 5th printing.

Since retiring, Schwirian has been very active as an emeritus professor in the College of Medicine. He is co-author of four books and editor of a fifth, and has several pages in his vita listing his journal articles and papers that reflect his interests in urban sociology, research methods and statistics.

In the NCSA, Schwirian has served as president, editor of *Sociological Focus*, and he is currently Chair of the Publication Policy Committee.

NCSA Distinguished Teaching Award Talk by Debra Swanson

The 2009 recipient of the NCSA Distinguished Contribution to Teaching Award, **Debra Swanson**, Professor in the Department of Anthropology and Criminology at Hope College gave a talk titled, "i Teach" focusing on the ways in which faculty should value their students.



Using information from Graham and Grant-Marshall's (2007) book, *Mind the Gap!*, Swanson cited information from their generational quiz. For example, the generational quiz reveals that traditional age college students from the Millennial generation --people born between 1980 and 2000-- think "Michael Jackson has always been white, have never owned a record player, have always had an answering machine, Think the Vietnam War is as ancient a war as World War I and World War II, have only known a world with AIDS, and can understand 'c u b4 2nite.'"

Swanson noted that the millennial generation has "been immersed in a world of computers and information technology." Furthermore, Swanson said that Chester (2002) "suggests words to define this generation: impatient, desensitized, disengaged, skeptical, disrespectful, bluntly expressive, adaptable, innovative, efficient, resilient, tolerant and committed."

What does this means for teachers? How will knowing our students better help us become better teachers?" Swanson presented three "myths" about students that can provide insight for teachers.

Myth 1: Students today are just not as smart! Rising IQ test scores and the development of cognitive skills, especially virtual processing, through video game-playing, demonstrates the intellectual abilities of today's students.

Myth 2: We have to use the latest technology for every class. Swanson particularly noted the increasing use of Power Point in the classroom. While she suggested it can have some advantages, Swanson proposed this technology is inflexible, may be used as a crutch that prevents communication, can be boring, and may not improve test scores.

Myth 3: Students don't take our classes seriously. Swanson noted that "before they appreciate our classes, they need to see the value in what we are telling them." Engaging students in their own learning process creates life-long learners. "We must create learning environments in our classrooms to support these kinds of experiences."

Swanson suggested how to dispel these myths. First, social relationships are important. Teachers should acknowledge the importance of the students' various social relationships outside the class, and teachers should work on developing social relationships with their students. Second, experiences outside classroom, such as community service, are important. Next, use technology but do so wisely. Fourth, Swanson suggests teachers need to "enthuse them or lose them." If a professor is enthusiastic and passionate about the subject, students will be "drawn in regardless of the topic." Finally, help students understand their abilities.

Swanson summarized by stating, "So, if we can encourage social relationships between students in our classrooms, if we can use outside classrooms experiences, and if we can allow our students the freedom to explore new technologies without penalty, I think they are bound to catch our enthusiasm, passion and joy for this thing called sociology. And we can encourage that by being honest with them by having high expectations for them. If we don't, maybe we aren't taking our students seriously enough."

The full text of Debra Swanson's address will be available in an upcoming issue of *Sociological Focus*

Recipient of the 2009 Scholarly Achievement Award

Dan Zuberi

The 2000 NCSA Scholarly Achievement Award for a significant contribution to the discipline of sociology has been received by Dan Zuberi for his work *Differences That Matter: Social Policy and the Working Poor in the United States and Canada* (2006, Cornell University Press).

Zuberi is an assistant professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of British Columbia with research interests in inequality and urban poverty, social policy, social welfare, labor, and immigration

The SAA Committee would also like to acknowledge the fine work of these additional finalists for the award:

Daniel Jaffee (Michigan State University). 2007. *Brewing Justice: Fair Trade Coffee, Sustainability, and Survival*. University of California Press.

Kelly Moore (University of Cincinnati). 2008. *Disrupting Science: Social Movements, American Scientists and the Politics of the Military, 1945-1975*. Princeton University Press.

Jackie Smith (University of Notre Dame). 2008. *Social Movements for Global Democracy*. Johns Hopkins University Press.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM Jay Weinstein's PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

On Friday, April 17 2009, NCSA President, Jay Weinstein, Eastern Michigan University, gave the Presidential Address on "What the World Needs Now: A Model of Rational Altruism."



Weinstein described the purpose of his talk as challenging the "view that social-economic rationality is rooted in egoistical behavior." Weinstein critiqued this dominant ideology that believes "maximization of self interest – *egoism* -- is the ultimate form of rational behavior." He noted that the principles of rational egoism are "counter to some of the most fundamental assumptions of our discipline" and argued that rational egoism "an impediment to a more altruistic orientation in social relations."

Next Weinstein examined the concept of altruism in sociology, noting that the concept was first used in sociology by Durkheim. For Weinstein, "The most important work on the phenomenon in sociology was produced in the 1950s and '60s by sociologist, Pitirim A. Sorokin." In *Altruistic Love* (1955) Sorokin, "found that good neighbors are just ordinary people who are influenced by their parents, education, life experiences, and the groups to which they belong."

More recently, Weinstein noted the work of political sociologist, Kristen R. Monroe (1996) who "discovered that the cognitive disposition that supports altruism is perception of a common humanity." Jay argued, "Sociology studies the effects of class, race, nationality, gender, and similar variables on belief and behavior. The constant, about which these vary, is a common humanity. Thus, sociology must – at least implicitly -- accept as axiomatic that there is one humanity, which has endless varieties depending on 'personality, structure, and culture.'"

Weinstein, drawing upon Gandhian

economic thought which "stresses the quality of collective life (rather than the maximization of individual advantage)," proposed a new model of rational altruism, the central component is termed the "calculus of alternatives." According to Weinstein, "This formula seeks to explain the choice among alternative acts made by an actor whose concept of rationality includes a reckoning of the extent to which the outcome of the action will benefit others."

While still in the development stage, the model of Rational Altruism presents an intriguing alternative to the tradition of rational egoism.

A full text of Jay Weinstein's Presidential Address will be published in a forthcoming edition of *Sociological Focus*.

2009-2010 NCSA Executive Council

The newly elected North Central Socio-



logical Association officers for 2009-10 began their term at the Business Meeting on April 18, 2009.

Newly elected are: President-elect J.I. "Hans" Bakker, University of Guelph, Ontario, Canada; Vice-President-elect Arthur J. Jipson, University of Dayton; Secretary Barbara J. Denison, Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania; Council at Large Jieli Li, Ohio University; Student Section Chair Daysha Lawrence, University of Akron. The returning members include: President Kathy Rowell, Vice-President Deb Swanson, Treasurer Anna Linders, Membership Chair Kathy Feltey, and Council Member at Large Mellisa Holtzman.

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL

John and Ruth Useem Reception Friday, April 17, 2009



Join us next year for more
good food
and great conversations!

SWS

Sociologists for Women in Society

SWS is an international organization of social scientists--students, faculty, practitioners, and researchers--working together to improve the position of women within sociology and society in general. There are local and regional chapters, including NCSA SWS.



The NCSA chapter of Sociologists for Women in Society (NCSA-SWS) hosted a luncheon for students at the annual meeting in Dearborn.

NCSA-SWS is one of five regional chapters of SWS, an organization of "sociologists and social scientists who work together to improve the position of women in sociology, and in society." NCSA-SWS has been a presence at the regional meeting for many years, hosting a lunch meeting for NCSA members to talk about research, teaching, and doing sociology with a focus on gender and women.



For more information on NCSA-SWS, including a membership form, visit

<http://www.ncsanet.org/SWS/index.htm>.

To become more involved in NCSA-SWS activities, contact

Natalie Haber-Barker (nhaber@luc.edu)
or
Kathy Feltey (felteyk@uakron.edu)

**FROM THE DESK OF
Kathy Rowell
NCSA President
Sinclair Community College**

I am so excited to have the opportunity to serve as the NCSA President for the 2009-2010 year. I have been a member of this organization for over twenty years and continue to be grateful for the mentors and colleagues that I have in this organization. I am also very pleased to be the first "community college" President of this organization. I plan to address the issue of community colleges sociologists and involvement in professional associations (both regionally and nationally) in my 2010 Presidential address.

Before noting the 2010 meeting information, I would just like to note that the 2009 Annual Meeting Dearborn would not have been possible without the hard work and dedication of the Vice President, Lynn Ritchey, her committee, Executive Officer, Dean Purdy and our Past President, Jay Weinstein. The 2010 meeting should prove to be an amazing event as we are meeting again with the Midwest Sociological Society March 31 to April 3 in Chicago. Numerous people within the NCSA and MSS have been meeting for the past three years to coordinate this event. A special thanks to Debra Swanson, NCSA Vice President, who has been working for the past year with Peter Kivisto, 2010 Midwest Sociology Society Program Chair to organize and plan for our joint meetings.

As many of you know, our organization has gone through a few changes this year. We will be saying goodbye to our long time Executive officer, Dean Purdy. I personally would like to extend my gratitude to Dean for all his dedication and years of service to this organization. Dean truly has been a servant leader for this organization and his experience and dedication will be missed. Jay Weinstein, Past-President, worked diligently this past year to head the search for both a Conference Coordinator and a Public Relations coordinator for this organization. We had several great applicants and we are pleased to welcome Joyce

Lucke, Paragon Meetings and Associates, as our new Conference Coordinator. Joyce brings much experience to the NCSA and we are pleased she has accepted the position. Our new Public Relations Coordinator, Susan Alexander, is no stranger to the NCSA. She has served in several positions within the NCSA including Secretary and Newsletter Editor. The NCSA is fortunate to have Susan working to publicize our organization. Again, thanks to all involved in the search committee and please take a moment to welcome them to the NCSA.



As I look back on the past year, I had the opportunity to reflect on Jay Weinstein's 2009 initiatives for this organization, I find that we still have much work to do in increasing participation by Ph.D. granting institutions, community colleges, and Canadian institutions of higher education. Interestingly, I think in the past year the NCSA has clearly indicated its commitment to these initiatives by electing a President from a community college and also recently electing J.I. "Hans" Baker, University of Guelph, Ontario, Canada, as our 2011 President. Overall, my major initiative is to increase membership and participation at all levels in this organization. I am looking forward to working with all of you towards this endeavor. I truly think we are off to a good start. Please mark your calendars for the joint meetings in Chicago.

**Special Thanks
to Dean Purdy**

After many years as the Executive Officer of NCSA, Dean is retiring.



We wish him all the best!

NEW
NCSA Conference
Coordinator Joyce Lucke



The NCSA is pleased to announce our new Conference Coordinator, Joyce Lucke.

Joyce has an extensive background in meeting planning including:

- *Meeting Planning* certificate from the Department of Tourism, Convention and Event Management at IUPUI
- 5 years as event management for the Annual Meeting of the Central States Anthropological Society
- 3½ years as project coordinator for educational conferences and meetings at IUPUI, including:
- Bears as co-director of the Indiana University Associate Faculty Conference

Previous to Paragon, Joyce's career was focused on academics. During her employment at various universities, Joyce was very involved with campus activities, often serving as chair or faculty advisor to events on campus. Her academic background includes:

- Ph.D. in Anthropology from the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee
- 18 years teaching on the university level (University of Indiana and University of Wisconsin systems); courses range from introductory freshman classes to senior seminars
- Recipient of several teaching and service awards, including the inaugural recipient of Indiana University's Excellence in Teaching Award for Part Time Faculty

WELCOME JOYCE!

NEW
NCSA Public Relations
Coordinator Susan Alexander



The NCSA is pleased to announce our new Public Relations Coordinator, Susan Alexander.

Susan has been serving as the editor for the *North Central Sociologist*, the official journal of the NCSA for the past three years. She is currently chair and professor of sociology at Saint Mary's College in Notre Dame, IN. Her research and teaching interests include media culture and gender, particularly masculinities.

If you have ideas for an article for the newsletter, please contact Susan Alexander, Saint Mary's College
salexand@saintmarys.edu

2009 STUDENT PAPER
COMPETITION RECIPIENTS

Each year the NCSA sponsors a student paper competition for both graduate and undergraduate students. This year 27 papers from 18 colleges/universities were submitted. Dr. Carolette Norwood, University of Cincinnati, Chair of the Student Awards Committee, announced the winners at the conclusion of the NCSA Business Meeting.



Graduate Division

1st place: **Jennifer Chambers**, West Virginia University for Zoned Out: Conflict and Perceived Threat in Rural-Urban Fringe Area. Advisor: Dr. Corey Colyer.

2nd place: **Kristin Marie Jordan**, Indiana University for The competitive edge in college destinations: the role of cultural capital and college admission preparations. Advisor: Brain Powell.



3rd place: **Sibyl Kleiner**, Indiana University for Thinking with the mind, thinking with the body: Self-conscious symbolic interaction as a basis for trained non-symbolic interaction in the case of dance. Advisor: Eliza K. Pavalko.

Undergraduate Division

Undergraduate Student competition winners:

1st place: **Jenna Perkins**, Macalester College for Student Political Advocacy: Professor, Parents, and Volunteer service as key social forces. Advisor: Erik Larson

2nd place: **Tineka Brown**, Hofstra University for Colorism is real, practiced, accepted and reinforced by society: which has a continuing affect on African American women. Advisor: Sharon M. Irving



3rd place: **Evan Bowness**, University of Manitoba for The debate over systematic racialized policing practices in Winnipeg: A discourse analysis



Congratulations
to all students who submitted
papers for the
NCSA paper competition!

North Central Student Sociology Conference

by Carrie Erlin
Saint Mary's College

Formerly known as the Midwest Student Sociology Conference, the NCSSC serves to provide a place for both undergraduate and graduate students to present their work in a professional setting and to receive feedback on their work from other students, faculty and professors, and other sociological professionals. With the NCSSC embedded into the NCSA annual meeting, students also have the opportunity to attend regular NCSA sessions where they can explore and learn more about the different sub-fields of sociology and areas of research in which faculty engage and also learn more about the NCSA as an organization.



This year fifty-one students from twelve different colleges and universities submitted papers for presentation at the NCSSC. These papers were split into ten thematic sessions across Friday and Saturday. The thematic sessions covered a diverse field of topics from issues relating to family and adolescent sociology to sociological views of the military. Each session showcased four to five students, with a faculty volunteer serving as a discussant.

In a session on issues in consumption and consumerism, Ashley Bruce (Saint Mary's College) presented *Going Green or Growing Greed: A Content Analysis of Green Advertising in Popular Magazines*, finding not only a significant rise in 'green' advertising from 1998-2008 and the increasing use of 'greening' products as a marketing strategy, but also that these retailers are increasingly targeting women with their advertisements.

In another session, Rob McCarthy's (Indiana University—South Bend) presentation *Home Internet Access and its*

Effect on Social Networks demonstrated through survey data that increased home internet access was positively correlated with an increase in social network tie strength and network size, but negatively correlated with network density. Rob attributes these findings to the fact that those without home internet use are more likely to use the internet to connect with local contacts, such as emails to close family and friends, rather than use their limited time on the internet to seek out others.

The NCSSC also included one poster presentation session on solutions to gender inequality, with students showcasing their research into different areas of gender inequality, including gender inequality in education, infanticide, law, and policies against prostitution. Another session was conducted as a panel on students' experiences with the Inside-Out prison exchange program. The Inside-Out program, headquartered at Temple University, is facilitated by Professor Paul Draus at the University of Michigan—Dearborn campus. The semester-long course is taught as a partnership with a group of "outside" students from the college campus and an equal number of "inside" students from a local prison.

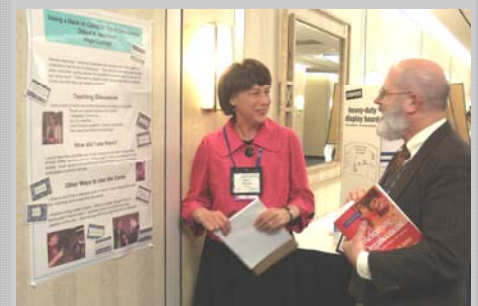
A panel of students from the UM—Dearborn detailed their experiences in the program and how being a participant in Inside-Out has had a formative effect on their lives. As Bryan Granger, one of the UMD students, said, "Inside-Out was a life changing experience for me. This course got 'outside' students to see the human in our 'inside' classmates."

Student response to the inaugural NCSSC was extremely positive. One student stated the conference helped him "recharge his sociology batteries," while others characterized their experiences as "wonderful" and "amazing."

Look for a call for papers for the 2010 NCSSC in the Fall, 2009 *North Central Sociologist*,

or contact Dr. Carrie Erlin at cerlin@saintmarys.edu for more information.

FEATURED SESSIONS: POSTERS on DISPLAY



SOCIOLOGY and TECHNOLOGY in RESEARCH AND TEACHING

"Bodies and Blogs: How Online Users Understand Messages from *The Biggest Loser*"

By Christine Mattley
(Department of Sociology, Ohio University)
and Karin Sandell
(Media Arts and Studies, Ohio University)

Although it has long been conjectured that the media play a vital and powerful role in the discourses about bodies and the construction of textually mediated bodies, one of our frustrations remains the failure to articulate the actual process of how that occurs.

In our NCSA paper last year we argued that this occurs in part through intertextuality, which refers to any relationship between two texts such that the meaning of one text is enriched by, or is even dependent upon, its relationship to the other text. Using the reality television show *The Biggest Loser* we demonstrated how its message was developed at the intersection of the program and the attendant web pages, blogs, magazine articles, and newspaper articles. We believed the logical next step was to explore the ways these intertextualities operate for viewers. Hence, we analyzed two online forums to see how the audience receives and deconstructs the intertextual messages.

One forum is sponsored and controlled by NBC and is part of the official webpage for the show. The second forum was started in November 2008 by a fan independent of the network who had experience moderating forums. The development of independent forums represents a form of viewer agency by offering a site free of the sometimes heavy handed moderating that takes place on network sites and where the free range of audience topics could be supported.

Once we began observing the online message boards it became clear that something more was at work. Drawn initially to the boards by their interest in the program, these individuals have

can share their interests and explore where those interests can lead. In the process, their shared knowledge builds, and the conversation becomes more sophisticated, with some evidence of technical jargon (for example, posters evaluate product placements in the program). They become more demanding, looking for further plot and character developments to sate their growing need for complexity. Viewing home alone morphs into a different reception process altogether. The audience also shares their experiences across platforms, posting on Facebook, MySpace and editing together their favorite moments to include on YouTube. The technology allows individuals to disseminate their message, that is, their interpretation of the original text, thus gaining agency in the process. Program producers, initially focused on controlling the message top down, seize on the new content directions and begin to respond through the text. And in the audience use of the technology, and the resultant network response, we find evidence for what Jenkins has described as a new convergence culture. We started by looking at intertextuality, but found that it didn't take into account the participatory culture (convergence culture) we are observing. Our next step will be to try to trace this process of convergence culture as the audience continues to communicate across additional platforms.

Jenkins, Henry. 2006. Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide, NY: NY University Press.



Social Life on the Internet

(submitted by Lissa Yogan)

Presenters:

Melinda Messineo
Ball State University,

Christopher Near
Indiana University,

Adam Babich

West Virginia University, and

Gustavo Mesch

University of Haifa, Israel

This year's session titled "Social Life on the Internet" highlighted the work of four individuals you are analyzing SecondLife on the internet, the uses of social network sites, the presentation of women on video game covers, and the use of social networking sites as a source of data on Men who have sex with Men. The four presentations highlighted the ways in which computers and the internet have become integrated into our lives but may not have significantly changed them.

Christopher Near (Indiana University) examined sexism in video games. Using a random sample of 500 video games released between 1998 and 2008, Near examined changes over time in the portrayal of women in game box art, analyzing the frequency of central or sexualized women in games using cultural production and institutional theory for framework. He hypothesized that incidence, centrality and sexualization of women have increased over time, but found that incidence changed little and centrality and sexualization decreased over time. He also hypothesized that the presence of sexualized women is negatively related to review scores; because game firms may use sexualized box art to attract young male consumers for poor-quality games that will likely receive unfavorable reviews. He found that portrayals of women on the covers had no effect on reviews or sales, but that positive reviews positively affected sales. His work contributes to our understanding of how the video games industry works as an agent of culture production, particularly of notions of gender.

(Continued on next page)

SOCIOLOGY and TECHNOLOGY in RESEARCH AND TEACHING

Melinda Messineo and some of her students also looked at how the online community *Second Life* works as an agent of culture production. The presentation is based on the data gathered in an immersive learning seminar that explored these questions. Students explored how constructs such as race, gender, socioeconomic status, and sexuality are expressed in the digital environment. Through online and in-person interviews, students analyze the way that selves, communities, and borders are constructed, experienced, resisted and maintained.

Much of the criticism surrounding online networking and gaming sites is how they enable participants to falsely represent themselves. Some criticize the superficiality of the online environment and the resulting relationships. Whether it is the person on the dating site who submits a "recent" photo that was taken ten years ago or the pedophile who pretends to be a teenager hoping to lure a victim to a meeting, the fear that is generated by this ability to misrepresent one's self is widely felt. Their research used a snowball sampling approach to identify interview subjects within a few online communities. As residents of the virtual community *Second Life*, students also reflected upon and explored how the virtual landscape influences their own experiences of self, community, and borders.

Overall gender seemed to be a difficult boundary to cross. It is difficult to alter the avatar's body structure and physical gesture once an original gender has been chosen. Some also expressed the idea that portraying the opposite gender required completely altering one's way of thinking.

Race was seen as being easier to change than gender in SL, and most felt that it was not necessary for the actual person's race to match the race of their avatar. However, once again only a small minority claimed that their avatar portrayed a different race or ethnicity

than their own. The sentiment was that race was not an issue in SL.

Overall, although SL participants have the ability to alter their identity in any of the above areas, the average user does not seem to take advantage of this possibility. Most adhere to the existing real life boundaries.

One group of people who do not follow conventional boundaries, are often ostracized and thus have used social networking sites to meet similar individuals are men who have sex with men (MSM).

Research on the practice of men who utilize the Internet to meet other men for sex has largely focused on men who have sex with men (MSM) in urban settings. However, there is little data on rural gay men themselves. In recent years, a new phenomenon has emerged where people have begun to bridge connections with others in various locations through the use of social networking sites (SNS). Adam Babich's study proposes to look at the differences between how rural and urban men use these SNS to meet other men for companionship. On several of these websites, members are able to create profiles in order to network and correspond with other males of interest.

Babich hypothesizes that the profiles themselves will be constructed differently between the rural and urban MSM. Studies have shown that rural MSM are typically less connected with gay culture and often experience more anxiety about their sexuality than those MSM who live in an urban setting. He will collect ads from five rural areas and five urban areas and code them for various items, such as the type of language used in the profile (simple conversation vs. sexually aggressive dialogue) and whether or not the profile contains an identifying profile picture. This will enable him to look at the extent to which rural and urban MSM differ in their use of these websites.

Since these profiles are in public domain, the information is able to be maintained without being invasive to the sub-

ject. However, research of this nature is relatively new and therefore methods on collecting and analyzing as well as IRB and ethics is something that needs to be developed.

Finally, the work of Gustavo Mesch analyzes characteristics of social networking sites' users and the effect of the intention to maintain or create new ties on its use. In this study two questions are investigated. First, is whether social networking users differ in their intention to use the sites for bonding or bridging social capital attainment? Second, whether these intentions explain the use or desistance in the use of social networking sites. Overall 1103 Internet users participated in an Internet survey that was conducted by a commercial company with high experience in the administration of these instruments. Thus, the study includes Internet users only.

In the study it was found that 41 percent of Internet users have set a profile in social networking sites. Yet only 34.7 percent maintain currently their profile and 6.3 percent have desisted. I compared the characteristics of respondents that have a profile in a social networking site with respondents that while using the Internet are not participants in social networking sites. The results indicate that users of social networking sites are younger than non users (27.4 years vs. 29.07 $t < .001$). Among the social networking sites users Jewish participants are overrepresented. While 46.8 percent of the Jewish sample indicated using social networking sites only 17.9 percent of the Arabs reported so. Marital status is associated with the use of social networking sites and in this study was found that 47.8 percent of the single but only 32.7 percent of the married are users of social networking sites. In terms of education, social networking sites users have a lower education than non-users. Finally, social networking site users use on average the Internet for more hours than non social networking users.

SOCIOLOGY and TECHNOLOGY in RESEARCH AND TEACHING

The results show that the most important predictor for staying as a user is the type of use. Individuals that are using social networking sites for bonding, this is to stay connected to known individuals and family members or to connect to old contacts, are more likely to stay. Thus, the main result is that motivation for use is a strong predictor of desistance. Users that set up a profile to maintain existing ties are more likely to stay than users that set up a profile for expanding professional and occupational connections.

The results indicate support for the hypothesis that desistance is a result of a mismatch in the user orientation. Individuals whose aim is to use social networking sites to increase their bridging social capital feel disappointment and are more likely to drop out than individuals whose aim is to communicate with known ties through social networking sites.

In all, the four presentations highlight ways in which individuals are using social network sites and the slowness of change regarding portrayals of gender and race.

TEACHING TIP

Using YouTube in the Classroom

By Kathleen Gray, PhD Candidate
University of Pittsburgh



tion and facilitate their memorization and organization course material. Thanks to websites like YouTube, we have access to a wide variety of video that can be integrated into our lectures with just a bit of careful planning.

Unlike full-length films, YouTube clips are short so multiple clips can be used within one lecture. For instance, in one 50 minute lecture on rationalization, I used clips of a woman making a hamburger at a fast-food restaurant, video of my text's author discussing his work, two 1970s commercials, a comedy bit produced by a video blogger, and a news story about meat-packing plants. Having so many short videos kept student attention while enabling me to illustrate many relevant concepts and theories.

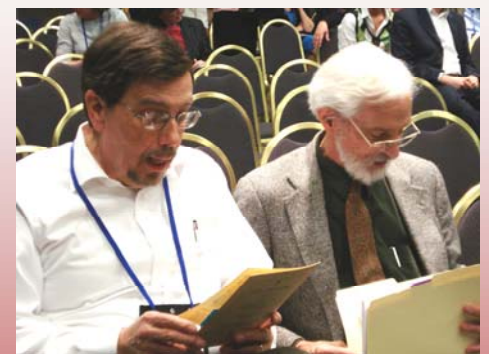
By showing a short video, discussing its relevance to the course, and then replaying it, you can reinforce your point and engage visual and auditory learners. More importantly, students can apply newly acquired knowledge to an analysis of video content during their second viewing. This promotes higher level learning skills like application, analysis, and evaluation.

Not all videos are useful. Avoid clips that demonstrate insignificant course material or are topical but otherwise irrelevant. Also avoid clips that include some inaccurate or controversial material that you won't discuss. Remember, video is memorable – only show clips that focus student attention on essential course content. To help students become smarter consumers of online content, briefly review the source, validity, and generalizability of each clip.

YouTube videos are easy to access and use. With an internet connection, laptop, and projector, an instructor simply navigates to the video's URL. To keep a video for future use or show video without internet access, get an FLV player and download the clip using a website like KeepVid (both free online). To seamlessly move between clips during lecture, stack them on your computer's desktop and cue them before students arrive.

A well-chosen video clip can bring course material to life, engage students, and facilitate learning, making this technique effective and fun for big and small classes.

FACES FROM THE 2009 NCSA Meeting



SOCIOLOGY and TECHNOLOGY in RESEARCH AND TEACHING

Producing *YouTube* Sociology in the Classroom

Steve McGuire
Muskingum College

At the 2009 North Central meetings I gave a presentation advocating that we sociologists use sources such as *YouTube* as a way of producing a public sociology. I have been asked to transform that message into a how-to, for teaching.

Perhaps one of your courses touches on the media. But even if not, students can be brought along into publishing their sociology, as video on the Internet.

I think it makes sense to spend class time teaching students how to produce short films and upload them. After background work on the media and work on



li- censes, attribution, public domain and Creative Commons, etc. I spent lab time first to point out to students that they can appropriate many of the still photographs images on sources like *Flickr.com*. Then, that you can download and utilize sections of films from sources like the *Internet Archive*. For a somewhat more detailed exposition of utilizing the *Internet Archive* to accumulate stock, see my review below.

And in turn that you can work with public domain music from sources like *ccmixter.com*. And that you can readily capture your own video work onto a computer, and edit your film into interesting video. For a similar analysis that focuses on students doing sociology through documentary film making, (see Tabachnick).

For an example of student work from

the class that I taught, which was in an adult education program, go to *YouTube*, and in the search box type in <SOCIOLOGY PROJECT 0001>. There should be a thumbnail (small image) with the byline <rrausch89> to click on. Perhaps a concern at this point. Does not one need to learn all these things, before teaching them. In a word: yes.

But learning them is do-able, something one could in a month or two accomplish to the point of being able to do one's own interesting work. Serviceable camcorders and accessories can be acquired for a research outlay comparable to that of four external drives. The cost for interesting software runs in the same ballpark, given educator discounts.

To view the examples that I presented and discussed in terms of globalization and neuro-marketing, type in <DrSteveM> and click on "Outsourcing Sperm" or "The Buy Button in the Human Skull."

Time? Video may well take much longer than article and book producing. And it raises questions of peer review, the nature of scholarship, and the like. But if you want a public sociology, or if you want your students to produce public sociology for wider audiences, you may want to explore this option.

REFERENCES

McGuire, Steve. (Under submission). Interactive Media Review. Muskingum College. 2009.

Tabachnick, David. (Under submission) *Wielding the Camera Pen: Teaching Sociology Through Filmmaking*. Muskingum College. 2009.

Teaching Workshop: An Inside Look at Mass Media Production: Breaking News

by Elizabeth E. Martinez
University of Notre Dame

The teaching demonstrations offered a number of ideas for using the news cycle to motivate student learning. Martinez proposed the use of "Breaking News," as a method for teaching students how to make publishing decisions about free speech, privacy, and defamation.

Through the role play, students come to understand how media is produced and shaped by social forces. In a "Breaking News" scenario, students are handed a news item presenting a publishing dilemma, in the context of an unfolding news story. Students work together, in small groups or "companies," to decide the appropriate scope of news coverage and to strike a balance between competing interests, all the while considering unknowns and possible biases. Benefits of the exercise include student engagement and clearer understanding of media processes, as well as increased classroom solidarity. The "Breaking News" exercise can be used in sociology of media courses, as well as courses on political sociology, social problems, or popular culture.

As Martinez pointed out, sociologists often portray the media as the institution to blame for a range of social problems from economic domination to sensationalism.

Yet, media actors are often small groups



of people making decisions within the constraints of public discourse and market competition. These constraints have only grown stronger in the Internet era, which has lead media outlets to lower professional standards in response. At the same time, when sociologists investigate mass-media professionals, they often do not consider that those careers require fast, critical thinking in socially constrained environments. The institutional routines and interactive processes of media professionals usually take a few minutes--and often change in an instant, in response to pressures from the general public or other media outlets. As Martinez showed in her teaching demonstration, if sociology students looking at media learn how to assess a news story in a time-sensitive, issue-sensitive manner, they will be in a better position to understand the media routines they are theorizing.

Joint Annual Meeting

of the

North Central Sociological Association
and the
Midwest Sociological Society

March 31- April 3, 2010
Chicago Marriott
Downtown Magnificent Mile

2010 THEME

COMMUNITIES IN AN AGE OF SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

By

Debra H. Swanson
NCSA Vice president / Program Chair
Hope College
and

Peter J. Kivisto,
MSS President-elect / Program Chair
Augustana College

Our intention is to look at a very old theme in sociology from the vantage of current debates about social changes that are occurring with a rapidity, expansiveness, and depth that have led some to concur with Anthony Giddens that we live in a “runaway world.” The word “community” has been part of the English language since at least the fourteenth century, referring since that time to a sense of a people’s common shared identity and to feelings of mutuality and belonging. In *Keywords*, British cultural theorist Raymond Williams observed that it would appear that the term “seems never to be used unfavorably.” It often does seem to have a halo over it, despite the fact that people often leave particular communities—including small towns, monasteries, and religious sects—because they are experienced as being too restrictive and parochial. Our stress is on communities, not community, for we believe that it is essential for sociology to come to terms with the varied ways and reasons that people bind themselves to others. As sociologists, we continue to be interested in the fate of traditional communities, while

at the same time we turn our attention to new community types that have emerged in recent decades. We seek to use the sociological tools at our disposal to make sense of the external factors that serve to promote or inhibit communities. Likewise, we are interested in advancing the sociological understanding of the motives that are at play when people commit to binding themselves to particular communities. Finally, we want to revisit the long tradition of focusing our sociological vision on the form and content of social interaction within communities. Among the kinds of communities we want to focus on during this conference are the following:

- Communities of place—including neighborhoods, local friendship networks, and ethnic enclaves
- Communities of space—which includes transnational communities and trans-local friendship networks
- Elective communities based on shared beliefs—including religious communities, political organizations, and social movements
- Imagined communities—most significantly being, as Benedict Anderson’s work attests, the product of nationalism
- Virtual communities—which include the fantasy worlds of multi-user domains, chat rooms, and civic networks

We have defined the focus of the 2010 meeting with the broadest of strokes. Indeed, a person would be hard-pressed to find any topic of interest to sociologists that cannot be linked to the idea of community. At the same time, we would note that by framing sociological topics in terms of community, it raises one of the most fundamental questions in sociology:

What are the bases of social solidarity?

This question, in turn, gets at an even more fundamental question driving sociological inquiry, even if it is an undercurrent. We refer to the question Georg Simmel posed a century ago:

How is society possible?

2010 CALL FOR ORGANIZERS

North Central
Sociological Association
2010 Conference
March 31-April 3, 2009
Hyatt Regency –

Theme:

“COMMUNITIES IN AN AGE OF
SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION”

If you are interested in organizing a session, send your proposal to the appropriate person LISTED BELOW.

Please include:

1. Title of your session
2. Your name and institutional affiliation
2. Mailing address AND email address
3. Telephone and fax numbers
4. Send **NO LATER** than **August 31, 2009**

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